The core textbook/materials need to be supported by:

- A distribution system, either from a central spot such as regional or district government offices where modest support can be provided as needed, or through out-reach provided by NGOs, community-based organizations, or supervisors who move among communities;
- A brief orientation for teachers on the lesson formats of the textbooks with practice, and definition of terms that may be difficult;
- In-service training at times and places that are convenient to improve teacher capacities in classroom management, subject content knowledge, child development, and teaching methodologies;
- An independent assessment system to measure learning progress and make it possible to give credit for completion of the various grades and stages.

Flexible delivery assumes that education authorities will not become fixed on narrow formats for schooling, that they will be open to cost-effective options. For example, countries have experimented with various teaching agents such as nomadic teachers who move with herders, construction workers, and migrants. They have used "circuit" teachers who move from community to community seeing children once or twice a week, they have used "correspondence" contacts or learning by radio.

In Afghanistan flexible delivery programmes would be particularly well adapted to the education of children and youth who have missed out on learning opportunities during the Taliban period because of employment in the military or exclusion from public schools. The flexible delivery programme requires only that a literate person be willing to teach these children and youth at times convenient for them. Because they are older, learning should progress more quickly. Competency tests should be the measure of how quickly they move from grade to grade rather than conventional measures such as time at each level, or their ages.

A programme that provides immediate flexible delivery (once materials are available) does not preclude the development of:

- A full institutional support structure for management, teacher training, supervision, assessment, and other elements normally found in the education sector of a country; in fact it permits these structures to be built more realistically around the experiences with flexible delivery;
- Improvements in the core materials to reflect national aspirations better, to address realities in the learning environment more practically, and to improve on the achievement of learning results;
- Enrichment of the core course through further curriculum development to extend its scope to new subject areas and skills.

Unless however all the structures in a national system recognize the need to support flexible delivery through the way management is conducted, materials are developed, delivery systems are set up, and credentials are provided, the ability to reach all children in conditions like those of Afghanistan will be sharply curtailed.

4. Improving quality: the quantity-quality debate

Quality is discussed here in relation to access, and below in relation to academic programs.

The quality of learning programmes has often been ignored as an issue affecting access. As an access issue quality relates importantly to parents' and children's feelings about the importance of going to school and to children's sense of their abilities to succeed in academic learning. Not only do parents not see any apparent benefits in sending children to a school where they do not learn, but research shows that children who do not perform well academically and repeat grades are more likely to drop out early.

For a long time educators believed that resources spent on quality would reduce the resources available for expanding opportunities. Consequently many countries poured resources into school construction to increase the places available for children and hoped that exposure to schooling would at least provide minimal skills. Ironically this construction boom had the effect of decreasing (sometimes severely) quality as seen in children's test scores. The system simply could not provide high-quality teachers and materials to meet the sudden demand. Children in scattered or remote communities had no chance of education since it was too expensive to build schools in these communities. When parents saw that their children were not learning in the poor quality schools they pulled them out early to engage in more useful activities. .

As a consequence of these experiences many educators now believe that it is impossible to separate quality from quantity, since each has important effects on the other. Studies have shown that schools of better quality (with more learning) attract more pupils and keep them from dropping out. The more pupils learn, the more likely they will stay in school. The discussion is now turning to emphasis on quality programs that can be delivered in a variety of ways, not just through formal schools with highly qualified teachers. Some of these other forms of schooling have proved highly successful. For example, girls in home schools in Afghan refugee villages in Balochistan performed statistically higher on competency tests than children in formal schools in the same villages. They did better despite the fact that they had fewer hours of instruction during the year and their teachers on average had lower qualifications, and they studied in a much simpler home school environment.

The implication for policy makers is that program quality and quantity both need consideration, and that one without the other diminishes both. Access to opportunities should not depend on costly construction. Indeed if it does, concern should be raised about whether this use of education resources may not be denying or delaying access of children to education opportunities, whether it may not be preventing the hiring of adequate numbers of good teachers, and whether it may not be taking away from important quality improvements in the program. The focus is now on how best to deliver education programs in a timely and cost-effective manner to children in a variety of situations and locations.

5. Providing more relevant content: life skills materials

Children and parents frequently find that the content of education is not relevant to their daily lives, or that the values learned in school do not conform to values in the local area. Schooling may lead children, as they become adults, to leave their parents' livelihoods/homes and seek employment in urban areas. To make education more interesting and relevant locally, many school systems now try to incorporate "life skills" content into the curriculum. These materials, it is believed, encourage children to find schooling more attractive and thus stay in school longer.

Relevance to Afghanistan

There are several reasons life skills information is relevant to Afghanistan. It can:

- Provide basic knowledge and skills on health, disease prevention, nutrition, first aid, community development, child protection, human rights, environment, and other essential topics in order to lay the groundwork for the improved well-being of all Afghans;
- Reinforce social development messages such as those provided by the BBC's New Home, New Life and REACH programs, and tin trunk box libraries. The lack of general information on these life skills topics means schools can and should play a needed role;
- Make children and parents feel that the benefits of education are more immediately apparent.
- Increase the already known impact of education on the country's development indicators by providing information that enhances these effects.

For Afghan children the usual life skills topics might be augmented to include Afghan history, culture, and information on other countries of the world.

Life skills materials have been produced for a number of audiences:

- For out-of-school girls in non-formal programs,
- As supplementary materials in the form of practice reading passages for older primary school children,
- As part of the core materials of existing primary curricula, and
- As program material for youth groups.

The materials have been written in several forms:

- Directly as basic information on relevant topics,
- In story form with a cast of village characters including a heroine who solves health, disease, and other local problems,
- As background material with suggestions that children act out dialogues/story lines to reinforce their learning of the messages,
- As child to child material, or discourse.

The process of preparing life skills materials requires at a minimum:

- Identifying a list of topics that are relevant to the lives of school children and their parents (through visits, interviews, first-hand knowledge);
- Collecting authoritative resources on the topics (World Health Organization, First Aid Manuals, books like "Where There is No Doctor," etc.);
- Gathering writers including some who are familiar with children of the target age group;
- Deciding on a consistent format that clearly states the message objective, a mode of presenting the relevant material, a way of practicing its use, and a way of assessing whether the concepts have been absorbed;
- Writing the materials, sharing and critiquing them, and refining them;
- Testing their use with appropriate children (assessing whether life skills messages have been communicated, the materials are interesting to children, and whether teachers find them easy to use);
- Refining the materials further;
- Developing systems for distribution, teacher orientation, and assessment of their impact.

In some school systems where they began as supplementary materials, life skills materials have proven so valuable that they have been incorporated into the regular syllabus. Educators have found that the same lesson format can address learning objectives and provide relevant content. Books consequently do not need to increase significantly in size when life skills materials are incorporated.

6. Making schools more girl-friendly

There is widespread recognition that when girls go to school, they often experience education in a very different way than boys do. Their more negative experiences may cause them to achieve at lower levels, leave school early, and discourage others from enrolling in school. The negative experiences come from:

- The existence of few educated women role models in some schools and communities;
- Curriculum and instructional materials that emphasize subjects, language, actors, personalities, etc in ways

that stress the roles and achievements of males over those of females, and limit the roles of girls to ones not necessarily enhanced by long-term education;

- Classroom arrangements that put boys in a more prominent place and give them more opportunities to answer questions or practice skills;
- Teacher-pupil interactions that encourage boys' performance and diminish the academic accomplishments of girls;
- Teacher efforts to discourage girls' aspirations in certain areas such as math and science and to channel them into "gender-appropriate" ones;
- Appointment of boys to leadership roles, while girls are given support roles;
- Assigning more school chores to girls causing them to miss more instructional time;
- Harassment of girls by teachers and male pupils;
- Spaces and equipment reserved for boys without equivalent facilities for girls;
- Inflexible school schedules and homework demands that put a greater burden on girls who often have more housework responsibilities and cannot meet the school deadlines.

The initiatives that have been used to respond to these gender imbalances include:

- Review of curriculum materials for gender-balance;
- Sensitization workshops to make school staff more aware of how these factors affect girls' experience with education;
- Sensitization workshops for teacher trainers, supervisors, curriculum writers, textbook illustrators, and test developers;
- Discussions in communities to make parents and leaders aware of how local practices affect girls' schooling experiences;
- Recruitment of more female staff to act as role models and counselors to girl pupils and to help them resolve problems they face in school;

Some countries now incorporate gender sensitivity issues into mainstream pre-service and in-service courses in order to reach more teachers at less cost. Other groups such as curriculum writers and illustrators still require training but their numbers are far fewer, and thus more manageable.

The same kinds of issues that cause girls to have difficulties at school face children from poor backgrounds or from minority ethnic groups who feel others' expectations of them are not as high as for other classmates.

7. Providing scholarships/other incentives to encourage girls' participation

Incentives have been used in various ways to encourage girls to go to school, attend regularly, perform well, and continue to higher stages. In some cases they have been essential in convincing resistant parents/communities to enroll girls, or in compensating poor parents for school costs and children's lost labor. The incentives are most often money, food (such as wheat or edible oil supplied by international organizations), or payments on behalf of girls to obtain services related to schooling.

Although useful in some situations, incentive programs often run into difficulty. Some of the most common of these include:

- Setting selection criteria for candidates, recruiting them, and monitoring that the right candidates receive benefits;
- The excessively high cost--sometimes equal to or exceeding the amount spent on the scholarships--of administering the program;

- The time and effort spent by education supervisors on distributing and controlling the incentives--often removing them from other important responsibilities in the school system;
- The almost inevitable corruption associated with these programs and the difficulty of preventing it;
- The sometimes (in "successful" programs) overburdening of education programs ill-equipped to handle a large and sudden influx of children, putting in question the education benefits the additional children derive;
- The difficulty of pulling out of scholarship programs without losing pupil beneficiaries.

Two examples illustrate ways that scholarships/incentives have been used creatively to address roadblocks in the provision of education services.

To create opportunities for rural women to continue their studies. A network of women's groups in Morocco raised funds to support "scholarships" for girls in conservative rural areas where there are few female teachers. To make the money go further the women chose outstanding pupils from a number of villages. The girls' parents were asked to select families (usually relatives) in towns with middle schools where they would permit their daughters to board. The boarding families were given stipends for the girls' expenses as long as they maintained satisfactory grades. The women's groups through their affiliates arranged for volunteers to support the girls with tutoring, counseling, and enrichment programs. When the girls returned to their villages they became teachers, and also the first female role models for local girls.

To expand opportunities through private initiatives. Balochistan (and also NWFP) established a trust fund where a set "scholarship" amount was paid to a teacher for each girl she enrolled in a class (assuming and requiring no less than 25 girls). The teacher was trained in how to set up the school and to market the program to parents so they would be willing to pay increased fees as the scholarship amount was gradually reduced over a period of years. The teacher was therefore motivated to keep the girls in school and show parents that the program was a good one. Eventually she owned her own school. These schools were set up in poor urban and rural communities where there were no other opportunities for girls to learn, and they provided long-term employment for women teachers.

8. Issues of scale and cost

The seven strategies above have been relatively successful in increasing schooling participation, especially for girls. They raise the issue, however, of comparative cost and ease in broadening access as quickly as possible. Providing new school buildings is obviously the most costly of the options and in the short-run it may serve to narrow the accessibility of opportunities if care is not taken. Improving textbooks and providing more relevant content are inexpensive options compared to the costs of constructing schools, refurbishing buildings, and renting rooms as ways of increasing participation. They also benefit the entire population of school children. However without the characteristics that make them suitable for flexible delivery, some of their value as a way of encouraging educational participation is lost. The strategy of creating more girl-friendly schools takes considerable training time and its impacts are not so clearly apparent. It is perhaps better adopted when there is need to close enrollment gaps in specific areas and to refine education programmes once the majority of children has been enrolled. Providing incentive/scholarship programmes takes a great deal of time and energy, is costly, and usually only affects the participation of a few girls at a time.

Only "flexible delivery" offers the opportunity to reach a majority of children cheaply and easily. Once an instructional package with these characteristics is available--also incorporating improved quality and relevant content--the main cost is in distributing and providing the minimum support it requires. These tasks can readily be performed by regional education officers, NGO staff, and community organisers through expanding existing formal and community programmes to new areas and groups of children.

III Developing a Quality Education Program

A. Main issues in Afghan reconstruction:

The Afghan educators in their deliberations identified several issues related to education quality. The main issues are:

- Definition of quality
- National vision and goals
- Curriculum framework
- Instructional materials
- Supervision, monitoring, and assessment
- An aligned system

B. Relevant conditions in Afghanistan:

The educators discussed conditions in Afghanistan that may impact education quality. Among them are:

- The need to apply technical expertise to education and remove it from the political arena;
- The absence of a guiding Afghan vision and goals from which a curriculum framework could be derived;
- A multitude of education programs with varying degrees of quality, none based on a national curriculum;
- Out-dated, difficult to support, or in other ways inadequate instructional materials;
- A fragmented education programme with components rarely reinforcing one another toward learning objectives;
- Resource limitations requiring cost-effective and innovative ways of making the best use of and expanding the resources available;
- The broad experience of Afghan educators with various programmes, learning technologies and approaches to learning;
- A willingness of educators to stress quality essentials of education programmes rather than physical infrastructure.

C. A definition of quality

Many definitions of quality exist. Too often the absence of an agreed-upon definition is used as an excuse for not tackling the issues of quality. Some common definitions expressed verbally or as items in check-lists assumed to reflect quality, include one or more of the following characteristics:

- The level of resources/facilities available to a school;
- The qualifications of the staff - academically and/or professionally;
- The extent to which teachers organize pupils to be neat, orderly and well-behaved;
- The extent to which the teacher reflects model behavior: neat, clean, soft-spoken, mannerly, pious, etc.;
- The extent to which teachers use teaching behaviors they learn in training;
- The creation of a child-centered schooling environment;
- High pass rates on exams.

Most of these characteristics relate to "ideal" conditions rather than to their direct impact on learning goals -- learning being assumed to be the goal of an education system. The characteristics may be nice to have in

classrooms but none necessarily increases or shows how it will increase learning. Experts may search the world for the best learning techniques and methods, but if they can not show that they increase learning in schools where they are applied, they have not shown they are effective. It is hard to imagine any of these characteristics alone or in combination guaranteeing an increase in learning in every situation. Consequently these definitions are not useful in building an education systems.

A workable definition of quality needs to state an end-result that will demonstrate it has been achieved. In the absence of agreed-upon definitions of quality, a good working definition is:

> **A quality education programme is one with the capacity to achieve the learning goals set by the nation.**

The implication is that quality can be achieved if pursued systematically and systemically from a nation's vision, goals, and learning objectives. The quality of components by this definition would be evaluated in terms of the value they add to children's learning. That value is likely to increase if the components are developed in logical order and aligned with one another to produce the best learning results possible.

An aligned education programme might be built with the following linked steps:

- A national vision and goals that state the country's expectations for the education programme;
- A set of general and specific learning objectives (or basic competencies) derived from the vision and goals;
- Learning materials with daily lessons systematically built on the learning objectives;
- Teacher training designed to support children's learning of objectives using the focused learning materials;
- Supervision designed to emphasize children's learning of the objectives (rather than teachers' teaching behaviors);
- Assessment measuring the extent to which competencies have been learned and, where weaknesses exist, focusing resources to correct the problems.

The following section describes the components more fully.

D. Building a coherent program focused on learning

1. National vision and goals

Most countries have a national vision and goals. They are developed by groups or individuals representing the aspirations of the majority. The vision/goals are often expressed in terms of the kind of citizen the nation expects to produce and the kinds of contributions an educated person should be able to bring to national development. Ideally the vision should be expressed in a way that its parts can be analyzed and each stand as an element addressed by the education system. "Strong academic skills" for example might be translated into reading, writing and mathematical skills, and "technological understanding" might be translated into analytical skills, knowledge of scientific method and content, computer skills and whatever else is important to the country in this area. "The acquisition of a strong sense of national cultural values" might include knowledge of social studies, history, Afghan culture and religion. The goals broadly describe what is meant by the national vision.

2. A curriculum framework: general and specific learning objectives

The next step is a technical one of translating national goals into a framework of learning objectives or basic competencies. The framework breaks down general objectives into smaller sub-objectives that together lead to the

achievement of more comprehensive competencies. A scheme shows the sequence in which the sub-objectives are introduced to learn specific skills. The full scheme arrays the skills over a period of days, weeks, and years, with provision for circling back for review and revisiting a concept at a more complex level. This set of basic objectives or competencies provides the curriculum framework for an aligned education system. An important characteristic of the objectives is that they are expressed in a way that can be measured, so it will be clear when they have been achieved. There are of course other less tangible and harder to measure aims of an education system such as "loyalty to one's country" or "tolerance" that need to be taught and evaluated more creatively.

From time to time the curriculum needs to be reviewed to determine whether it adequately represents the people's vision and it should be changed accordingly to add or subtract learning objectives or to improve on the objectives that exist. It may also be necessary to change the vision and goals to reflect a nation's new priorities. These elements, as is true for any part of the education system, need to evolve to become better at representing national aims and needs.

3. Instructional materials

Research shows that the availability of textbooks is the single most important element in achieving quality (learning). Instructional materials provide a more uniform educational experience for children throughout an education program, they make it possible to depend less on a teacher's capabilities and knowledge of content, and new concepts can be presented in simple ways that children can understand. In many countries however textbooks are not developed systematically and consequently do not live up to their full potential.

The first purpose of textbooks is to provide clear presentation and practice of learning objectives, according to the framework of specific objectives in a timed and sequenced pattern. But at the same time they can:

- Support teachers by providing lesson formats that model methods to weak teachers and serve as a base for strong teachers to expand upon;
- Provide content such as life skills information (e.g. on health, nutrition, disease prevention, the environment, landmine awareness) that is relevant to the lives of children;
- Provide cultural history to help a fragmented nation find its common experiences;
- Develop a moral base that includes such fundamental concepts as those of civil society (e.g. respect for the rights of others, and contributions to society)

Studies in Pakistan showed that teachers using a systematic approach in their teaching produced pupils with higher achievement scores. These teachers were more likely to use some or all of the following steps (that might be used as a lesson format in textbooks):

- Statement of lesson subject/topic/objective to alert pupils to what they must learn;
- Review of previous lesson or other lessons that are a basis for the new lesson;
- Presentation of the new material/concept so children can understand it;
- Guided practice with teachers asking children questions on the new material/concept and ensuring their understanding;
- Independent practice where children use the new material/concept on their own;
- Assessment questions by the teacher to make sure children understand the concept;
- Homework using the concepts again.

This format contains practice in a number of forms that may be the reason pupils of these teachers performed better on tests. The independent practice especially helps children attack problems on their own, so they do not feel dependent on teachers to prompt them. From this type of lesson children learn at several levels including grasping

information/knowledge, understanding it, and applying it to new problems. Other levels such as analysis and synthesis might have been introduced if practice problems were constructed for this purpose.

There are two main ways of helping teachers use learning materials:

- The learning content can be simple and self-evident with one-line directions on how each section should be used (this method is helpful when parents want to help a child or a pupil use the material in self-instruction);
- An accompanying guide can describe how each section of the lesson should be presented. Since teachers often do not read long explanations, it is best to design guides in a way that they become the teacher's preferred main text. This can be done by including a reduced image of the child's textbook page, surrounding it with simple and concise instructions on steps to follow, and providing consistent formatting so teachers can find the same elements each day, for example, extra exercises for "guided practice" in a shaded box to the right side.

A guide when used properly helps to support weak, over-worked, or unsure teachers, and it does not require that strong teachers follow it, except perhaps when applying assessment questions to see if children have comprehended the material.

4. Teaching-learning methods/techniques

In recent years, undue attention has been given to teaching methods that are assumed to produce better learning because they have done so in Western countries. These methods which tend to stress the individual as a learner do not take into account other forms of learning or other classroom environments.

Children can learn in a variety of ways. Cultures usually feel more comfortable with teaching methods that mirror their own social relations. If respect relations are expected between children and adults then direct teaching methods are probably better than ones where children and teachers interact on a more equal basis. Direct teaching methods are well adapted to subjects that require an understanding of a body of knowledge, as well as skills that need practice or application. They can be used in teaching analytical and problem-solving skills. They are not, however, as successful at developing creativity which needs a less structured environment. Instruction can still be child-centered in direct approaches since teachers still need to be sensitive to the ways children learn, and provide them with the most suitable environments in which that learning can take place. Since schooling is one of the ways children are socialized to become adults it is important that classrooms are conducted in ways that respect local values. In some countries parents have been reluctant to send their children to school because they feel that what they learn in school alienates them from the local community and its values.

A focus on learning (which can be measured in terms of objectives) can lessen the controversy over which teaching techniques are best--if direct methods produce the kinds of learning the society wants, then they should be used; if other methods work better, they should be used. Teachers may be shown a variety of methods in their training but they should be allowed the freedom to decide which approaches work best for their classes. If the class shows high levels of learning then the teacher is right no matter which method she chooses. If the class does not, then the teacher may need help in finding more appropriate teaching methods (through counseling or in-service training).

5. Supervision, monitoring, testing and assessment

When an education system is aligned to learning expectations, then supervision, monitoring, testing and assessment are also clearly defined.

- Supervision is the act of determining that all parts of the education system come together in classrooms to produce expected learning results and, if not, identifying and correcting problems.
- Monitoring is the process of collecting routine data on those elements of the program that may be contributing to or detracting from or in other ways reflecting the achievement of learning results, including program activities (e.g. training), staff characteristics, pupil enrollments, retention, attendance, test scores, etc.
- Testing is the diagnostic tool that determines a) whether all parts of the education system are working to produce learning, b) whether individual teachers and students are performing to the level expected, and c) where to focus scarce resources so the program can improve.
- Assessment is the more general effort of evaluating results through formal and informal testing, and determining how various elements may be effecting those results. Assessment and testing are often used as if they were synonymous. However, assessment implies a more comprehensive effort to collect information and evaluate it.

The easiest way to determine if learning is taking place is to assess children's performance. This can take the form of competency-based tests, observations of children performing in classrooms, or any other means that reliably demonstrate that children are learning what they are supposed to learn. If they are learning, a supervisor need do little else, other than respond to teacher requests for training or other support she may need to improve her own teaching and her pupils' learning.

If supervisors find that pupils are not learning or only partially learning what they should know, they need to identify the causes (poor school management, inadequate training of teachers, lack of instructional materials, disrupted schooling, etc.). An assumption can be made that if pupils of other teachers with the same resources (such as textbooks) are learning then it is not the resources that are at fault but a special problem that needs to be identified. Supervisors need the authority to apply solutions such as additional training, closer supervision, model lessons, etc. Through monitoring the progress of children in all classrooms for which they are responsible, they can focus available resources in specific ways that strengthen learning in weaker classes. It does not make sense for supervisors to allocate their visits (or resources) equally to both high and low performing classes.

The advantage of a learning-focused approach is that supervisors can determine almost immediately with a few well-selected questions whether education components are producing successful learning in a class or with any individual student, and they can respond accordingly. When supervisors focus instead on teacher behavior (as learned in training), there is no reliable way of knowing whether teachers use these same methods when the supervisor is not present, or in fact whether these methods have any impact on learning.

Some may say that testing has too great an importance in this approach. However, testing drives teacher behavior and is therefore an important motivating force. The kinds of questions and the way they are asked on exams or by a supervisor, influence how a teacher will teach. Therefore it is important that supervisors and exams model the kinds of question-asking that improve teaching-learning. If questions are linked to competencies and it is clear from the start what the competencies are, then testing should not be an experience that causes children or teachers undue anxiety. It should be possible to check children's learning informally at any time and the results should be clear. Test scores of 80% and 90% should be expected under normal circumstances in competency-based programs, but if they are not achieved, the tests should make it clear what items need more practice.

Testing in some systems has the main purpose of discriminating among students for promotion to higher levels; the results are mainly used to show differences among students. This kind of testing may lose sight of what should be its main purpose in an education system: to see if students are learning what they are supposed to learn. Pass rates as low as 30% are often set as a standard for achievement in these discriminatory tests because otherwise few children would pass. As a normal testing mechanism these tests may produce negative effects by:

I Introduction

A. Opportunities and risks in the current situation

More than 20 years of turmoil have deprived a generation of Afghan children from realizing the important benefits of education, and Afghanistan from attaining the basic levels of social and economic development that education brings with it. The time is opportune to begin discussions of the future of education in Afghanistan. The current situation is not all dark; there are important building blocks that can form a strong foundation for any future education development. Among others, there is increased interest in education among Afghans, particularly for girls. Even in the face of extreme adversity, Afghan communities, families and children have kept education alive inside the country over the last decades. They have experienced a diversity of programmes and understand the support needed to sustain them. A group of Afghan professionals have developed a Basic Competencies Framework and the related instructional materials to teach them. These materials for core primary subjects are designed for flexible delivery and minimum support in the difficult conditions of Afghanistan. Most importantly there is a group of committed Afghan professionals ready to rebuild an education system that provides quality education for all Afghan children. The positive effects education can bring to Afghan children's psychosocial well-being by providing structure, routines, and normalcy makes these services a priority in future Afghan reconstruction.

These hopeful signs, however, risk being undermined if appropriate decisions are not made during reconstruction. In particular, three risks seem almost certain to derail the development of a sound education programme if care is not taken. The first is the danger of putting physical infrastructure before the provision of quality programming. Sound education has never depended on physical constructions. Perhaps worse, when a physical space becomes the prerequisite for the provision of education services, as it often does, the access of many children to education opportunities becomes delayed or denied altogether.

The second risk is in fragmenting an evolving education program, by "throwing" solutions at it in a incoherent, un-integrated way. Curriculum development, teacher training, supervision, and assessment do not work independently. Each requires thoughtful consideration of how it reinforces the other parts, so that together they can accomplish a nation's learning goals. There are no proven education elements that stand on their own as effective instruments of learning. And indeed when presented as isolated activities they can easily disrupt overall progress toward program goals.

The third risk is that international resources will be assigned in ways that reinforce the old inequities in Afghan education. Even an action as simple as supporting the budget of existing governmental structures or the salaries of government teachers, risks perpetuating the past preponderance of education services to urban over rural communities. The direct result may be to discourage the broadening of rural opportunities, and reduce the number of home and community schools as teachers seek employment in mostly urban government schools. If government structures are not designed explicitly to encourage new rural schooling and if space is not provided in an equitable way for NGOs and communities to participate, it will be difficult to realize the Afghan vision of education for all.

The present situation of limited educational opportunities inside Afghanistan calls for a two-pronged response in the post-conflict period. The immediate need is to provide quality educational opportunities to as many children as possible in the shortest time frame possible. The medium-term need is to establish a national system that can cost-effectively manage education resources in the future. The aim should be to build on the positive elements in the Afghan experience while leaving enough flexibility so that every Afghan individual and group has the space to contribute, and every Afghan child has access through a variety of delivery means to the same high-quality programme. Also important will be a national system that can evolve through continuous modifications and improvements to the changing needs of the Afghan people. The choices of policy options in the near future are

- Causing pupils and teachers extreme anxiety because they do not know exactly what is to be tested;
- Often requiring memorized knowledge of factual details, asking trick questions with many parts, all of which must be correct to get a full score, or requiring scoring based on subjective judgements rather than clear criteria;
- Not assessing the true learning results of pupils and consequently not showing them or their teachers how they might improve.

Because they have little relation to learning objectives, these tests force pupils to learn content that is of little long-term benefit to their acquisition of skills. The tests drive teachers to teach content and methods that are not useful--and no teacher-training course is capable of erasing these motivations.

Data collection, monitoring, and assessment also have the larger goal of continuous improvement of programme elements. Education programmes need to evolve if they are to improve. As a central element, an education structure needs a systematic and continuous means of collecting information about programme performance if it is to make the improvements that help the system evolve ever closer to achieving national aspirations. The learning objectives/basic competencies approach makes it possible to determine whether the system in whole or in part is functioning well. It also provides the means of knowing whether modifications are correcting the problem.

IV Building the Institutional Structures of a National System

A. Main issues in Afghan reconstruction:

Key issues in building national structures for the education system include:

- Creation of a cost-effective "stream-lined" bureaucracy
- Locus of management: centralized or decentralized
- Financing and creating additional sources of support
- Roles and responsibilities of actors at national, regional and community levels
- Systemic approaches (including the importance of accreditation and licensing)
- Building human resource capacities
- Planning and development capacities

B. Relevant conditions in Afghanistan:

Afghan educators identified conditions in past and current education provision with implications for the development of an institutional framework to support education:

- The present absence of a fully functioning education system creating opportunities to form more effective, efficient "lean" structures;
- The existence of local education initiatives providing a base upon which to build;
- Local organizations/institutions supporting education programmes in many areas;
- The many existing programmes providing broad experience but little consistency of result;
- Lack of accreditation and licensing capacities making it difficult to transfer between programmes or providing evidence of study completion.
- Major gaps existing in the provision of opportunities at all levels of education;
- Unequal distribution of resources in the past: geographically, to different groups of children, and among education stages leaving major inequities in educational attainment;
- Many areas of the country remote or difficult to access and consequently difficult-to-serve and support through centralized mechanism;
- Too great a politicization of education leaving the sector disrupted during every change of government;
- Important resource limitations requiring cost-effective approaches and innovative ways of expanding financial support.

C. The functions of institutional structures

The main purpose of central institutional structures is to support education programs of teaching-learning. Consequently each part of the institutional structure should bear a clear relationship to some aspect of the programme it supports. The education bureaucracy is responsible for carrying out the following roles related to the education programme:

- Advocating for and garnering resources to support education programmes;
- Planning for the needs of the education programme;
- Allocating resources to the various stages and parts of the programme;
- Setting priorities for resource allocations across various groups, geographic areas, and education components;

- Coordinating activities across a national system and where appropriate with other public and private sector entities that support the programme;
- Developing and communicating national policies that facilitate the smooth operation and/or attain the objectives of the programme;
- Establishing the objectives of the education system and setting the guidelines;
- Establishing standards for, recruiting, hiring and training teachers and staff who implement the programme;
- Giving tangible credit (degrees/diplomas) for those who successfully complete programmes;
- Ensuring quality through programme development, testing, supervision, monitoring and assessment, and setting up systems for continuous improvement of programmes.

The best institutional structures evolve out of the grassroots level. They are "best" because they link closely with their ultimate function of providing quality education services. Each element at the grassroots school level has its corollary in the national system: management, materials, teachers, supervision, physical facilities, supervision, data collection, evaluation/assessment, etc.

The current situation in Afghanistan that anticipates a two-pronged approach to education in the post-conflict period--first a rapid response that delivers quality education services quickly and then a longer-term institutional development--provides an opportunity to build solid national institutions. The rapid response approach with minimal systems supporting the distribution of a basic programme, provides the kinds of field experience that can inform the development of national institutions. Reversing this bottom-up approach, and starting with the design of national mechanisms risks structures that preserve form rather than function.

The following sections discuss some of the issues that will be important in decisions about forming a national education system.

D. Centralized or decentralized decision-making?

Whether decision-making is lodged in a central Ministry or in regional offices makes a major difference in how efficiently and effectively an education system can produce results. The decisions that serve as important sources of efficiency as well as control include:

- Resource allocation because it relates to priorities and equity;
- Recruiting, hiring, firing, and paying of teachers because it effects their motivation for teaching;
- Supervision, assessment, and improvement of quality because it determines the outcomes of the system;
- Credentializing or licensing completion of education levels because it helps standardize opportunities and provide credibility;
- Policy development because it sets guidelines for the whole education system.

In recent years the trend in many countries has been toward decentralizing more of the decision-making of education bureaucracies to regional and district levels. This is largely because schools situated far from the center receive less attention, and therefore are of poorer standard than those in urban areas close to headquarters. Central bureaucracies tend to become rigid and rule-driven, finding it difficult to deal flexibly with differing needs or variations in delivery in different parts of the country. They rarely leave space for local organizations and communities to contribute to schooling. Communities similarly find it difficult to hold far-away bureaucracies accountable for deficiencies that develop in the local education programme.

Decentralized systems assign decision-making roles and responsibilities to two or three levels. The illustrative scheme below takes elements that have been used in several countries and forms a model using the comparative

advantage of each level. The national level offices develop educational techniques and tools that can be utilized as needed in education delivery and they deal with matters that need to be standardized across the country as a whole. The regional or district level is closer to schools and therefore can react more quickly to resolve their difficulties. Communities provide the day to day supervision of schools to see that they have all the facilities they need to function smoothly.

National level

The National office takes responsibility for:

- Advocating for its share of the national budget, identifying additional sources of funding, budgeting for the national education programme; allocating and accounting for the expenditure of resources at all levels through a two-way communication with the field;
- Creating coherent systems for collecting educational data at all levels; the data serve as the basis for routine reporting and overall planning and support for the system;
- Translating the national vision and goals into curriculum objectives and developing instructional materials and teacher training programmes based on them;
- Creating a research and development capacity for continued improvement of the education programme, and to identify and develop programmes that meet new needs;
- Preparing nation-wide exams to determine whether quality opportunities have been equitably provided across the entire country (if not, to improve equity); and to show successful completion of various stages and grades for credentializing purposes;
- Overall policy development and communication of policies to the regional level;
- Analyzing reports coming from the regional offices to inform planning, the allocation of resources, and support as needed, etc.

One of the essential responsibilities of the central Ministry would be to ensure equity across the entire country, and where inequities were discovered to initiate actions to correct the problem.

Regional offices

Regional or district offices may take responsibility for:

- Allocating their share of the education budget to the programmes in their areas and providing full financial statements of expenditures to the center;
- Organizing education oversight committees with the power to make decisions, implement activities, and make policies that result in a more efficient and effective education programme;
- Recruiting, appointing, assigning, training, transferring, firing, and paying teachers within the region according to the general guidelines of the national education service; teachers can apply for transfer to new regions where their requests are acted upon;
- Overseeing the work of supervisors, and other regional or district officers;
- Ensuring the collection of education and other statistics necessary for reporting the status and progress of education in the region, and for reports to the national office;
- Communicating and enforcing policies that come from the center and from the region;
- Reporting on education matters to the national level.

Local community

Local communities may volunteer or be asked to take responsibility for:

- Contributing to the provision or maintenance of physical facilities such as providing land for a school, renting or offering rooms or buildings where schooling takes place, or contributing materials and labor to school construction;
- Taking ownership of and maintaining school facilities in good repair;
- Identifying local candidates to become teachers (the regional officer verifies the person's credentials and tests their skills)
- Organizing parent-teachers' associations to support the financial and organizational needs of the schools;
- Organizing school management committees composed of community members to act as oversight board to resolve problems of the school, see to timely delivery of supplies, monitor teacher and student attendance, and otherwise support the school.

By lodging decision-making at levels where it will have the most impact, the education system can become more efficient and accountable.

E. Planning and policy development

1. Main issues in Afghan reconstruction

Main issues in planning and policy development include:

- Scaling up
- Equity
- Policy development
- Information/Data collection systems
- Special surveys
- Reflective mechanisms with capacity to address identified need

2. Relevant conditions in Afghanistan

Opportunities and constraints in the Afghan situation include:

- Awareness by Afghan educators of many of the issues and potential pitfalls in key policy decisions;
- The absence of coherent policy structures to guide the establishment of an education system;
- The absence of widespread institutional structures to support easy dissemination of programs;
- The presence of regionally active organizations;
- The absence of all usual data for planning;
- The absence of national and regional mechanisms for routine data collections;
- The various systems, methods of collection and variety in types of data collected by projects does not allow for cross-national or even regional planning;
- Financial constraints requiring cost-effective solutions.

Afghanistan is confronted with a full range of planning issues that most systems solve over time. This section looks at only a few of the issues that will be involved in policy planning.

3. Information for planning

Afghan discussants expressed the need to remove education planning from the political arena. This is more easily achieved if it is agreed to base decisions on reliable information coming from the field and upon technical analyses

of education needs, available resources, and costs. Three kinds of information will be useful in the coming period: the first is routinely collected in most ministries of education through an Education Management Information System (EMIS). The second is information on the needs and available resources that will make the provision of services more rational and equitable. The latter which is more unusual is called here an Education Resource Survey (ERS) and satisfies at least part of the need expressed by the Afghans to take stock of existing assets and capacities. The third establishes the capability to assess school/teacher/pupil performance levels in order to know how to allocate resources for quality improvements. This system can be lodged in a National Testing and Assessment Bureau.

The kinds of information each of these components collects are described in more detail below.

EMIS: An EMIS collects data for education planning and for measuring the progress of the education system. The minimum critical indicators usually include:

- Schools: their location, facilities, state of repair, staff, class levels and enrollments, etc.
- Education inputs: teacher characteristics (sex, language when relevant), qualification, training status, and specialization, teaching aids, pupil textbooks, writing materials, etc.
- Pupils: their numbers, sex, age (difficult to obtain sometimes but useful as a school efficiency measure), class levels, repetition, dropout, etc.
- Quality: often quality is measured by proxies such as teacher:pupil ratios, pass-rates, availability of teaching materials, staff qualifications, etc; these proxies are not adequate in indicating the quality of teaching-learning, and school systems that use these proxies need to work toward better quality indicators such as subject scores on national exams.

ERS: (Similar examples can be found in Human Resource Surveys conducted in Balochistan and NWFP) An Education Resource Survey can be designed to answer key questions not covered by the EMIS. The advantage of such a survey is that it assesses educational needs and assets in all communities and not just ones where schools are already functioning. For example surveyors might collect the following data from each community:

- Needs: Estimates of children going to school, children not in school whose parents want to enroll them, children whose parents will school them under certain conditions, children whose parents will not school them at all.
- Availability of schooling opportunities in the local area for each grade and stage of schooling, or the nearest available facility of these types; also willingness of communities to provide land, labor, materials to build a school;
- Alternate opportunities: physical structures, community rooms or building that could be used as schools;
- Un-served children: Estimates of the numbers of children not served by the available opportunities and the conditions under which their parents would send them (sex-segregated schools or classes, coed classes up to a certain level, girls with female teachers only or a local male teacher up to a certain grade level);
- Availability of teachers or potential candidates: how far away are available teacher candidates, would they be willing to teach, what accommodation would they need, are there literate individuals whose skills could be up-graded, etc.

ERS data computer analyses could show areas where schools could be constructed quickly with the help of communities, where teachers (but no schools) are available to begin a program in a donated facility, where a class could be started if a female teacher were available, etc. Reports could be developed on the overall needs of the country, region, or district.

Testing service: Without adequate testing capacity it will be difficult to know how the academic programme is

faring, to ensure standards across the variety of schooling contexts, and to provide information for planners to know how to allocate resources to improve programmes. Testing services usually:

- Develop a test item bank of questions keyed to learning objectives (a number of items are prepared for each question to enable testers to randomize tests);
- Test the reliability of the test items to ensure that for any one objective its test items are equivalent;
- Conduct tests over the entire education system at roughly the same time or times of the year;
- Analyze the results by subject, grade, class, student (sex), school, region and national level to determine patterns of strength and weakness.

These test scores can be used as the quality indicators in the EMIS where they can be tied to other data, such as class size or teacher qualification to see if there are patterns that should affect resource allocations.

Developing these three types of data collection system requires technical competence to yield reliable information. An EMIS is at present under development with support from UNICEF. Although developed for NGOs and other organizations working in Afghan education, it is designed in a way that it can also be adapted to a national system.

Most monitoring and data collection systems do not meet their full potential, largely because they collect information the system does not use, or they neglect to collect data the system needs. Most education systems do not have "reflective bodies" that routinely use information for decision-making about programs and resource allocations. To do this effectively requires officials at all levels with defined responsibilities for "reflecting" and acting on the information collected, and determining what new kinds of data need to be collected to answer new questions.

4. Balancing policy priorities in Afghanistan

A number of the policy decisions that confront Afghanistan are not amenable to "correct" answers, but rather require a balancing of priorities. Too strong an emphasis on one side will diminish the impacts on the other. The following (discussed in more detail elsewhere) are a few examples:

- Equitable distribution of resources to rural and urban areas: If resources are applied mainly to reopening government schools without ensuring outreach to rural communities then the past emphasis on urban education will be sustained. On the other hand opening rural schools will be more costly and lead in the short-run to fewer pupils being enrolled.
- Resistant or demanding communities: Communities that demand education are more likely to contribute resources and send their children in larger numbers; resistant communities take more effort, and are less likely to contribute resources, but in the end their participation may do more to increase social and economic development in an area;
- Gender equity in education: It may be more costly to develop the special environments where girls will participate while boys may be more readily enrolled (again the issue of long and short term impact as well as equity)
- Quality and quantity: As discussed earlier, an overwhelming emphasis on quantity may lower quality; improving quality however seems to improve both.
- Selecting teachers: A need to increase the pool of teacher candidates requires lowering qualification criteria, while a desire to promote quality requires high qualifications (of a yet-to-be-determined kind) that increase learning.

F. Teacher issues

F. Teacher issues

1. Main issues in Afghan reconstruction:

A teaching force is vital for the expansion of educational opportunities in Afghanistan. The main issues include:

- Salaries
- Criteria for recruitment/appointment
- Training
- Opportunities for professional development
- Supportive instructional materials that compensate for gaps in teacher skills and knowledge

2. Relevant conditions in Afghanistan:

The following conditions in Afghanistan affect policy decisions about teachers:

- Normal academic and training criteria for recruiting teachers are difficult to apply because of lack of education opportunities in the past, especially teacher training and higher education;
- More potential teachers exist now than in the past because refugees from rural and other areas in Afghanistan have attended schools outside;
- An inadequate supply of teachers exists overall and particularly in certain areas, but this supply can increase if there are flexible qualification criteria at first;
- Many potential teachers who have managed to study have had their learning disrupted, have lost records, or they have been taught under informal or non-formal conditions for which they have no evidence;
- Female teachers who have been teaching in home schools and rural schools may switch to government schools if they believe they will receive higher and more secure salaries there; this may leave rural areas with even fewer teachers;
- Important resource limitations require cost-effective approaches and innovative ways of using funds to ensure a quality teacher corps.

3. Teacher recruitment and appointment

Recruitment criteria have traditionally included some or all of the following:

- Academic requirements: often completion of secondary or some level of higher education; the higher the academic level the higher the class a teacher is usually allowed to teach.
- Teacher training certificates or degrees: usually one or two years of full-time secondary training or higher education degrees, again often tied to the level a teacher may teach.
- A high grade score on the academic and/or teacher training completion exam.
- Personal qualifications of various kinds: based on age, sex, character, personal capacities, appearance, etc. These are sometimes identified through interviews.

Assessments of learning in Pakistan in the late 1980s showed that higher pupil achievement scores were more related to a teacher's length of academic training than to whether or not he or she had completed teacher training. Further studies in the teacher training colleges of NWFP in 1993, showed that trainees on the whole did not perform much better than primary pupils on the grade 5 completion exams. These colleges stress teaching method and not subject matter content.

Similarly, assessments of learning (in 2000) in Afghan refugee villages in Balochistan showed home school pupils taught by generally less well-qualified female teachers and with considerably less instructional time performed considerably better than pupils in formal schools of these villages with qualified teachers and more time. High

motivation and a warm schooling environment may have accounted for much of this difference. These studies suggest that relying on high-level qualifications to recruit what are expected to be high quality teachers does not guarantee that this will happen.

Options (Which teacher recruitment criteria to apply):

Option 1: Require strict recruiting requirements such as those above. However, there is little direct evidence that these teacher criteria individually or together are necessary for a person to be a good teacher and/or effective at helping children learn.

The immediate problem with applying strict and inflexible criteria in Afghanistan would be:

- The pool of candidates meeting these requirements would be very small and not meet the immediate need for teachers, especially in rural areas;
- A number of experienced teachers from who have taught in refugee villages and inside Afghanistan would not be eligible;
- A pool of literate Afghans could not be hired even though they might prove to be very good teachers with supportive materials.

Option 2: Use other criteria such as past experience and scores on qualifying tests, coupled with interviews to assess personal characteristics. The qualifying test might consist of the subject content to be taught. For example, test items could be drawn from the new Basic Competency materials for primary level to determine whether teachers had the requisite subject knowledge. Candidates should be given the opportunity to study available textbooks to prepare for the test.

"Less-qualified" teachers could be further supported by:

- User-friendly textbooks and instructional materials;
- A preservice orientation with emphasis on subject content, instructional materials use and essential teaching skills;
- Opportunities for teachers to up-grade their credentials through self-study and periodic public exams for primary, secondary and other professional courses. Teachers with lower qualifications could be appointed provisionally with the stipulation that they complete upgrading courses.

The provincial education department in Balochistan recruited Grade 8 female graduates in rural areas, gave them a three-month training, and supported them with frequent supervisory visits. They had to complete further academic and in-service training before they received salaries equal to qualified teachers.

Teacher appointment

Appointment of teachers has been controversial in some countries. When the central education office appoints teachers across the nation, there may be fewer redundancies. However teachers may not want to go to areas where they are posted, especially when it is a rural post and a female teacher. Also the center may be slow to respond to local requests for transfer or to emergency situations across the wide area of its responsibility. The region or district on the other hand can respond more quickly to needs because they are closer to the problems. They are more likely to appoint a teacher to a location nearer to home, making it more likely that the teacher will come regularly and on time. Local offices however may also be more influenced by local pressures both to appoint certain candidates and remove others. Despite the pros and cons of decisions made at both levels, decisions about teacher recruitment and appointment are more and more being assigned to local offices where it is believed they more effectively minimize teacher vacancies and rationalize the distribution of teachers.

4. Teacher Training

Training traditionally is composed of some or all of the following:

- Materials-specific instruction: in how to use available textbooks and other instructional materials in teaching;
- Classroom management: in how to arrange the classroom to make it comfortable for learning, including such considerations as lighting, ventilation, a ground covering, etc; in how to arrange children in classrooms so they have access to blackboards, and so the teacher can call on or move among them easily; and in how to avoid "blank" spots such as the back of the room where children rarely get called on to answer questions;
- Subject content: reviewing the knowledge/information/concepts and skills needed for teaching specific subjects;
- Methods: learning techniques that are effective in helping children learn;
- Theory: studying theories of development to better understand the learning needs of children;
- History of education: studying the evolution of thinking in the various schools of education.

Options (Pre-service or in-service training):

Option 1: Long pre-service training and short in-service courses. Traditionally it was common to require long (one or two years or more) pre-service training comprising many of the training elements above and culminating in a supervised period of practice teaching in schools. After entering service, teachers would attend periodic short in-service trainings on topics set by the education authorities.

Some problems with this system included:

- Teacher candidates with no previous classroom experience found it difficult to absorb so much theoretical material;
- The content was often not relevant to actual teaching conditions in classrooms and/or missed important teacher needs;
- Assumptions were made in some cases about teacher capacities that were not warranted (e.g. that they had adequate subject knowledge);
- Little effort was made to assess teachers' needs before assigning in-service topics and often resources were not sufficient to provide full in-service training to all teachers;
- No effort was made to see whether children's learning increased as a result of these training courses;
- This type of long pre-service training (especially when it required boarding) was very costly;
- With entrance based on merit, candidates from urban areas tended to be favored, but later these urban graduates, especially women, refused appointments to rural areas, compounding urban-rural imbalances.

Option 2: A short pre-service training with more frequent in-service training courses focused on the needs of teachers. This option might include a short pre-service training in the skills a teacher needs to cope immediately with conditions in classrooms such as how to use the available instructional materials in classroom teaching. This training could then be followed by a number of short in-service trainings that would build progressively on teachers' needs. This option could be further supported by teacher- and pupil-friendly textbooks and instructional materials that are not as dependent upon highly skilled teachers.

likely to have a long-term impact on efforts to achieve this vision.

B. The purpose of the paper

This paper is a follow-on to meetings held in Peshawar during the month of November 2001 when a group of Afghan educators supported by UNICEF gathered several times to discuss the future of Afghan education in the post-conflict period. A paper resulted from those meetings and was revised accordingly when presented for review and discussion to a larger group of Afghan educators at a meeting of the ACBAR Education Sub-committee. The paper, "An Afghan Perspective on Education: Building on the Past for the Future," was endorsed by 32 Afghan educators working in 22 organizations that provide education services to Afghans. The paper summarized key issues in Afghan education, described the building blocks upon which a future system might be built, suggested some lessons learned from the past, and recommended actions that could be taken to prepare for the future. The paper was further endorsed by a working group on education at an UNDP/World Bank/Asian Development Bank meeting in Islamabad, November 27 – 29, to discuss reconstruction in Afghanistan.

The general aim of the present discussion paper is to support the Afghan process begun in the Peshawar meetings. The primary audience is the Afghan educators in the Peshawar meetings as well as a broader group of Afghan educators involved in education provision and development. In addition other audiences include Afghan stakeholders involved in education in government departments and assistance agencies, including general planners, programme managers, decision-makers and others. The paper may also be of interest to assistance agencies and donors who will be making funding decisions in support of Afghan education. The paper addresses a number of the issues raised in the Peshawar paper and in later discussions in the UNDP/World Bank/Asian Development Bank meeting. The intent is to stimulate discussion on the implications of policy choice before time forecloses on the range of options possible. The paper does this by describing experiences with a number of education models, policy options, and strategies implemented elsewhere in the world. Most of the conclusions are based on syntheses of research and experience listed in the "Bibliography."

The paper is not meant to offer specific solutions or strategies (except in the last section) nor to negate the central role Afghans should play in working out the details of an education system for their own children. The intent is rather to describe a variety of options and their implications.

The paper is organized into five sections, this first introductory section is followed by four sections addressing key education issues:

- Increasing participation: access and retention,
- Developing a quality program
- Building the institutional structures of a national system
- Building Afghan education on existing foundations and initiatives

Some advantages of this option include that the training would:

- Permit teachers to absorb information/skills in more easily processed quantities;
- Be based flexibly on the direct needs of teachers, either as expressed by themselves, by a supervisor in consultation with the teacher, or by the results of pupils' learning results showing where teaching-learning weaknesses lie;
- Be cost-effective in that it doesn't require extensive physical infrastructure or long periods when a teacher is not in classrooms teaching;
- Be more easily organized and attended in district centers or nearby central schools.

5. Firing teachers and other civil service issues

Many countries develop such restrictive civil service rules and regulations that it is almost impossible to fire poor, unmotivated and abusive teachers and staff. The problem is compounded when the rules cross sectors. Also automatic promotion rules and the filling of high positions through seniority rather than merit leave the system unable to cope with new challenges and needs. When there are excessive numbers of teachers in the system, it is necessary to wait for death, resignations and retirements to reduce their numbers.

Options (Personnel vs. wider system interests in civil service rules):

Option 1: Continue the tradition of civil service rules and regulations that protect the interests of personnel against the better interests of the system.

Option 2: Develop a system that incorporates merit into promotion advancement and is competitive in terms of filling critical positions. Provide for the firing of staff who do not meet the standards required of the service, while providing appropriate safeguards to avoid possible abuses of the system.

Some countries use a system of hiring teachers on contract for a limited time with periodic renewal for the duration of their careers. Or they may contract them for a trial period until they prove their effectiveness, before they are offered a civil service position.

6. Teacher salaries

Teacher salaries often comprise 80 to 90 percent or more of education budgets, leaving little else for other education needs.

In Afghanistan the question of salaries is a difficult one for several reasons, including the following:

- Many teacher salaries at the present time are paid by parents, who themselves are poor and therefore cannot afford more than a token amount; as a result teachers are underpaid;
- Many teachers have left teaching because they are not paid at all or because their salaries are not sufficient to meet their needs; other have continued to teach with only token salaries;
- The teachers who are more likely to accept low pay are women and thus it becomes an equity issue since they bear the financial burden of teaching Afghan children;
- Another potential equity issue is one involving urban and rural communities: if more education resources are invested in urban areas, rural communities may be forced to pay a greater share of the cost of schooling children;
- Donors are often reluctant to pay the cost of salaries for reasons of sustainability; if they decide to do so for a time, they need to be careful not to perpetuate the inequitable situation of paying only for existing or

government teachers who live mainly in urban areas. The untended effect of this imbalance might be to delay outreach to rural areas, encourage rural teachers to come to cities, and discourage communities from sharing costs with the government or setting up their own community schools which they must pay for themselves.

One important aspect of who pays the salaries of teachers is that that group or institution has control over teachers. When it is the Ministry of Education, communities usually cannot influence the selection of teachers, nor their transfer, nor even the way they interact with their children. If it is communities, they often feel obliged to support the local teacher against such ministry controls as transfers, quality standards, and punishments for rule infractions. On the other hand local teachers may be more punctual, know the children and their families better, and may feel a deeper commitment to doing an effective job of teaching.

Options (Who pays salaries?):

Option 1: Continue to require communities and/or parents to pay teachers' salaries (paid as school fees), and solicit on a temporary basis, international support for the other costs of education such as books and writing materials. Refrain from requiring special uniforms or other items that would burden parents further. Alternatively ask only rural parents' to pay salaries but compensate them and not urban parents for the costs of materials to create equitable conditions.

Balochistan tried to encourage enrollment of rural children by paying the cost of their books. It worked very well for a time but ultimately this cost became too burdensome for the government.

Some implications for the Afghan context would be:

- Donors are more likely to pay the costs of materials than salaries;
- Communities should probably not count on this help for long;
- The government would need to ensure that the greater cost burden would not fall on rural communities;
- Communities would need to take responsibility for children who cannot afford schooling costs of any kind.

Option 2: Find sufficient revenues so the government can pay all teachers' salaries and equalize the pay scales across rural and urban areas, for male and female teachers, and for formal, community, and home-schools based on a minimum level of pupil enrolment and attendance, and the qualification and experience of teachers. The purpose would be to encourage teachers to stay in rural areas where their salaries would be the same as urban areas. If salaries were not enough, communities might offer the incentive of free accommodation or a bonus to attract teachers. The difficulty in this option is finding sufficient sources of funding. The advantage is that it equalizes the opportunities to most communities.

Option 3: Encourage the opening of private schools by urban and rural communities, individuals, and organizations. Provide trust funds that gradually are reduced over an agreed upon time as parents take over the costs of the school. (See an example under the section on "Incentives"). This does not equalize the costs to urban and rural areas, but it does encourage private initiatives in a period when government financing is likely to be limited.

G. Other Policy Issues

Education officials may be asked to make policy decisions about other issues. The arguments may seem compelling to start many programmes immediately, but educators may be overwhelmed if they establish too many

new programmes at once. For some suggested issues/initiatives the fundamental questions will be whether they should be addressed within the formal system at all, or whether they should have an immediate high priority at a time when most efforts will be focused on bringing more children into the formal system. In certain cases it may be wiser either to defer these decisions until later or to encourage NGO/private sector groups to establish needed programmes in the non-formal sector. The policy issues that will be discussed in this section include technical/vocational training, foreign and local language learning, adult literacy classes, kindergartens/day-care centres, and school feeding programmes.

1. Relevant conditions in Afghanistan

The conditions that are relevant to the issues discussed in this section include:

- The need in Afghanistan to train youth and former child combatants in vocational/technical skills in order that they can access employment opportunities and the country can benefit from a more skilled labor force;
- The need for education institutions to provide a unifying experience for the country. One way to do this is to ensure that children learn language(s) that allow them to communicate with one another.
- The low level of literacy in the country makes development more difficult.
- Early childhood or parenting programmes might give children a head-start.
- The need for day-care centres for working mothers;
- Poverty, drought and other factors have impacted children's health and nutrition.
- The need to know languages that make it possible to access opportunities such as up-to-date education programs and computer technologies that are only available in foreign languages
- The need to know languages that make it possible to communicate Afghan perspectives and listen to other perspectives from the wider world.

2. Technical/vocational training

Many persons contemplating the future development of Afghanistan believe it is important to develop technical/vocational training for children, either at the primary level or in technical training institutes. The reasons most countries give for providing these courses are to provide children with income generating skills, to help them save resources in their own homes by making needed repairs, etc., and to encourage value in manual skills. These programs should be considered carefully however as the experience with such training as part of formal schooling has been mixed.

Practical courses at the primary level. Some developing countries have tried to institute practical courses (basic carpentry, electricity, agriculture, plumbing, sewing and cooking) along-side academic courses at the primary level. Usually they discontinue them as a result of some of the following difficulties:

- The initial expense of equipping schools with tools, equipment, and materials is high.
- Schools may not have steady electricity to run equipment.
- Most practical courses need a continuing supply of basic materials, and most schools do not have the resources to pay for them (parents end up paying, the learning becomes theoretical, and/or projects are designed to use few materials).
- Most primary teachers do not possess the skills to teach these courses and consequently must undergo extra training.
- Teachers, parents, and pupils tend not to value these skills in comparison to academic skills that are more likely to lead to diplomas and office jobs; and they resent the time taken away from important academic learning.

- National exams rarely include practical tests, further diminishing the importance of these skills to teachers and pupils.
- Girls tend to be directed into home economics courses and boys into other courses and parents feel their children could have learned some of these skills better at home.
- Children rarely develop a degree of proficiency that would generate or save much income.

If children develop some degree of proficiency in a skill, local artisans and technicians may resent the competition for their services. Some school systems have approached the question of practical education more modestly by taking children to visit skilled workers in the community to watch demonstrations of their skills.

Secondary technical training. More success has been achieved at secondary and higher education levels after basic academic skills are established. However, there are still concerns to be considered. Some previous experience shows:

- Technical training is considerably more expensive per student than academic training.
- Equipment for these schools is expensive and often needs to be replaced frequently if students are to be taught on up-to-date machinery.
- The skills developed in government schools are often weaker than those of youth who work on-the-job as apprentices with skilled workers;
- The private sector often prefers to hire employees with practical work experience or to train workers for their own specific needs.
- Students with strong basic skills in reading, writing, and math can usually be trained in specific skills more easily after they graduate.

Where technical training has been most effective is in countries where governments or workers guilds/unions control the licensing of skilled workers and they therefore need to be especially trained to receive diplomas and certificates that will allow them to work in these occupations. There is usually also regulation of the intake and graduation levels to meet the nation's assessed needs for such skills.

The difficulties of trying to incorporate technical training into formal school grades are not of course relevant to specialized fields at higher education levels where costs and other considerations are less important than producing professionals with in-depth understandings of science, engineering and other technical subjects. They do not also negate the potential importance of non-formal courses in skills where there is assured need, especially if these courses can be tied to private sector support.

3. Local, national, and foreign languages

A major issue that confronts the education system in Afghanistan is the question of which languages to teach. With more than six major languages and numerous dialects, it will require important decisions about which languages to use.

Most research shows that children learn more easily and quickly if they start education in their own mother-tongues and then translate the skills they learn in the first language into other language learning later. Some countries have taken this to mean that all textbooks should be translated into every mother-tongue language in the country (17 in one case). The difficulties they have encountered include:

- The high cost of translating, producing, and distributing textbooks in all relevant languages;
- The difficulty of matching teachers and pupils with the same mother-tongues;
- The fact that in some areas classes contain children from more than one language group;

- Sometimes teachers have not learned to read and write their own mother-tongue (if they learned in the national language) and therefore they have difficulty teaching it;
- A concentration on mother-tongue instruction may delay the learning of a common national or foreign language; and pupils in some areas (often rural) may never learn it well if they do not start early.
- Girls tend to have less practice with non-mother tongue languages because their movement in areas where these languages are spoken may be restricted.

There are usually political reasons for choosing particular languages for the national language of instruction. Those who speak it fluently immediately have an advantage in learning. Also languages almost more than any other skill learned in school (except reading and writing) open opportunities. Adults with only local language skills have a limited range of job opportunities compared with those who have national and foreign language skills. Consequently equity issues arise when some children learn national or foreign languages well and others do not.

There are many examples of countries where children start learning in a national or foreign language rather than the mother-tongue language. Their learning may be slower at first but it does not appear to suffer over time if the following conditions are met:

- The (non-mother tongue) national language is taught as a second language initially and not as though pupils already know it;
- Teachers are able to provide informal translations to help children understand better;
- Teachers or pupils are able to help those isolated individuals in the class who neither understand the language of instruction nor the usual language of translation;
- Means such as distance learning (by radio) is used to compensate for teachers who are weak in the national language, as often may be the case in rural areas.

Evidence therefore suggests that although initial learning is best in mother-tongue, the advantages need to be balanced against the advantages of proficiency in a national language that provides more opportunities to pupils in their future lives.

Foreign languages. Foreign languages bring many of the same advantages as national languages, although once again they enlarge the scope of opportunities that may be available in increased private sector and international employment and information exchange.

Even more than national languages that may be heard in local areas it is important to teach foreign languages as second languages. Teachers must be competent in the languages or their lack of skills needs to be compensated by distance learning techniques.

4. Adult Literacy

A large number of countries in the world provide adult literacy programmes, this despite the fact that almost without exception the programmes have not had much success in actually developing literacy skills. Some of the reasons this is true are that the programmes:

- Have insufficient funding, poorly paid teachers, poor materials;
- Last too short a time (3 or 6 months is not uncommon);
- Have poorly motivated participants;
- Have little available literature in the locale to keep up any skills that are achieved.

Literacy programmes often do not have a clear purpose and when they do (for example to communicate health and

other social development information) they could probably have achieved their purposes more easily through other means. The life-transforming aspects of literacy occur most clearly when a person moves through the formal education system acquiring certificates with each level completed. The limited skills learned through most non-formal literacy courses have little employment or other value (unless the benefit comes as part of the course content, e.g. health education). Recent research has found little correlation with such potential benefits as "being more likely to send daughters to school."

The adult courses that are more likely to be successful are those that:

- Are directed at motivated younger participants (pre-marriage age when they still have time to study), and the skills they learn can still impact their adult lives;
- Have flexible scheduling convenient to the participants;
- Are geared to obtaining primary and higher certificates; or
- Are associated with known employment opportunities at the end of the course.

When resources are scarce, overall experience suggests that it is better to adapt primary schooling programmes to the needs of various groups (as in flexible delivery) than to teach literacy skills independent of any strongly motivating need on the part of participants for these skills.

5. Kindergarten/day care centres

There are several reasons usually given for providing kindergarten/day care services. They include:

- Children who go to these programmes tend to do better in primary grades later;
- Children from disadvantaged households can profit from early enrichment,
- The added provision of health, nutrition and parenting programmes at an early age supports more healthy children,
- Mothers are more likely to take income-generating jobs if they can leave their children where they know they will be well-cared for,
- Girls who are released from caring for siblings are more likely to go to school themselves,
- Establishing a pattern of schooling at a young age makes it more likely that children will attend primary classes, and that they will be prepared with the habits to begin learning.

The advantages appear to be mainly on the side of providing these programmes, and when sufficient resources exist it may be useful to add kindergartens to primary schooling. However there are certain considerations if the intent is to provide these classes to all children:

- Such programmes are expensive partly because they require more teachers per children if they are to be more than "holding" institutions; in places where teachers are already hard to find the pressures on the teacher pool will therefore increase;
- Teachers need to be especially trained to work with children of this age;
- Programmes need to be designed especially for children of these ages; in countries where they are not, teachers often resort to primary level books or teach children above their capacity,
- Children often are not given enough play time, have to sit still for too long or otherwise show disciplined behavior that ends with their disliking school (one of the largest drop out rates for children in NWFP comes between the pre-primary Kachi class and Class 1 Pakki class).
- Providing these programmes only for urban children further disadvantages rural children

The formal system in Afghanistan will be under pressure for some time to come, simply in providing opportunities

for primary schooling. Initiatives to provide day care or kindergartens might for the time-being be better supported as non-formal or private sector programmes.

6. School feeding programmes

Feeding programmes can also prove useful in a country like Afghanistan where evidence suggests that children may not be receiving adequate nutrition. Programmes of this type are often provided for the following reasons:

- To enhance the nutritional status of children and families generally;
- To ensure that children are adequately nourished so they can take full advantage of their academic programme;
- To provide an incentive for parents to enroll children and keep them in school.

The main difficulties with these programmes (outside of cost) are in the time-consuming process of accounting for and seeing that food is delivered, and the inevitable difficulty of withdrawing from the programmes once resources are no longer available. School staff should not be more than minimally involved in these activities or it takes away from their other important responsibilities. Also, equity concerns need to be met to ensure that food is not just delivered to more accessible urban sites. If feeding programmes can be paid for, managed and implemented by groups outside the school system, then they may be useful but they should not become an added burden for staff.

H. Minimizing the structures of government

The potential that exists now to restructure the education system in Afghanistan presents an opportunity to establish "lean" government structures. These institutions should be designed, not to fit a conventional or past model, but to fit one that will be compatible with Afghanistan's needs and resources now and in the future.

Many developing countries find themselves unable to cope with increasing populations of school-aged children when their education budgets are not increasing correspondingly. Their Ministries of Education are burdened with over-staffed, overly-bureaucratic structures that no longer function well and consume a large share of education resources. Civil servants cannot be fired even though they are not needed or do not perform well. Salaries are low because there are too many people on the payroll. Money is not available for research, experimentation, monitoring or evaluation and therefore program quality is poor and many children are not reached. Motivation is low and accountability while still active up the hierarchy of supervisors may be low when it comes to parents and children who are the main clients.

A model of a "lean" Ministry is described below for illustrative purposes. Some of its parts may be appropriate in Afghanistan and others may not be. Almost all of its components are ones that have been individually adopted by specific countries to reduce costs. No country actually uses this model in its entirety, although it is not entirely theoretical since it is based on private sector principles that are well-known and well-tested.

In a lean model of a reformulated education structure one might find:

- **Management**. National education institutions are charged with managing education services (rather than as acting synonymously with the structures and activities themselves)
- **Identification of needs**: A research and development section of the ministry identifies "customer" needs for education, reports back to management, and when given permission to do so, organizes the necessary development and testing of program solutions (for example, an accelerated primary program for older children)
- **Competitive development**: The managers within the ministry could alternatively let competitive bids for

development of the new program to private specialists in program development. Their contracts would specify learning objectives, required support structures, and costs of the programs to be developed. It would define penalties that would be imposed for not meeting these requirements;

- **Outsourcing activities**. Activities related to the implementation of education programs could also be "outsourced" (on contract) to private groups specializing in these services, as for example the publication of materials, dissemination of programs, supervision, training support, monitoring, and testing (or the ministry might reserve "results-testing" for itself).
- **Cost issues**: The ministry would concentrate on such issues as financial feasibility of projects including actual costs, the potential for cost-recovery, letting contracts and ensuring their successful completion and, most importantly, the "seamless" integration of all out-sourced activities of a project.
- **Quality control**: The ministry would control quality results by reserving the authority to independently test and credentialize the attainment of specific grade and level standards. The achievement of learning objectives rather than time spent on the program would determine the issuance of degrees. There would be no age requirements to enter or exit the program, and anyone could use self-instruction and sit for the competency or criterion-based exams.
- **Customer focus**: Since several programs would be available (as for example, a full 6 year primary program, an 18-month accelerated primary program, or an extended program designed for working children), communities and parents could decide which program met their needs. The "packaged" nature of the program would make it easily delivered to formal schools, difficult-to-reach children including secluded girls, or physically disabled children. The producer of the program would have to ensure that it fit the convenience of the pupils.
- **Community participation**: Communities would contribute a location for the program and perhaps choose a local teacher for training or a teacher already specialized in the particular program. Usually the community would pay the salary of the teachers and possibly other costs.
- **Equity concerns**: The education of poorer communities could be subsidized by government resources, or those communities could choose cheaper programs, such as after-hours schooling that allow children to work during the day, or accelerated programs that could be completed in a shorter time. There would be other ways of cutting costs by using recycled textbooks, through in-kind payments, etc.
- **Staff incentives**: The teachers would serve on contract and therefore they could be dismissed by the parents if the children were not learning properly. An independent tester would provide results to parents so they would know how well the pupils were performing. Ministry staff levels could be adjusted through voluntary phased retirements, keeping more staff on when need existed, and allowing half or full-retirement when over-staffing was a problem.

This hypothetical model is presented here to make the point that traditional institutional structures, many of them established according to patterns set many years ago are not necessarily the most effective ways of running education systems at the present time. It is possible to create structures that address the ineffective aspects of education institutions and encourage in a positive way the objectives that are desired.

V Building Afghan Education on Existing Foundations and Initiatives

A. Background

In 1998 a process was engaged to develop a quality academic programme for Afghan children. Afghan educators from a broad range of agencies involved in education provision across different geographic areas took part in the initiative. The program was designed to address specific conditions inside Afghanistan and in Afghan refugee villages. These conditions included the difficulties of supporting teachers in distant areas, and of making opportunities more accessible for all children, especially girls.

Over the last two years, as part of this program, nearly 60 Afghan educators from a number of local and international organizations developed a Basic Competencies Curriculum Framework and a set of related instructional materials. These materials for math and language arts (Pashto and Dari) in grades 1 through 6 form a core program to develop the basic skills a child needs to perform well in other subjects. The materials for the early primary grades are now ready, and the ones for the upper primary will soon be ready. They offer basic instruction in a format that requires little field support to reach children in a variety of contexts in a short time period.[2]

The core materials come in a class "package" that consists of pupil textbooks, a teacher guide, and a cloth poster outlining the competencies children should master in each grade. It can be supplemented with a writing materials package. The combined package can be distributed with minimum orientation to any literate "teacher." It is self-evident and easily used. The format provides complete daily lessons, with practice exercises structured to build the skills of problem-solving and application and discourage rote learning. The content of the lessons addresses skill-development at the same time that it provides life skills information relevant to the lives of Afghan children. At this time there is no other set of primary materials developed by Afghans with the flexible delivery capacities of this core programme.

B. Short term rapid response strategy

In discussion with some members of the Afghan development group, several of the following points were noted about how these core Basic Competency materials could become the basis of a rapid response to Afghanistan's current crisis in education. The sense is that sufficient capacity exists among professional Afghans working within their regional, national, and international organizations, and through current government structures in Afghanistan to implement a rapid response program as long as sufficient funding support is provided. The following activities suggest a framework for rapid-response.

Rapid response objective: **To deliver education services to as many school-age children inside Afghanistan as possible in the shortest time frame possible.**

Activities:

- Assemble a team of Basic Competency developers and others who will serve as a planning group;
- Take stock of available channels and human resources through a quick inventory, visits, and discussions

[2] A problem that often reduces the impact of experimental programmes has been avoided with these materials. Successes achieved when a programme is small and easily supported are often more difficult to achieve when the same programme is brought to scale. This is largely because important supports are minimized for expanded delivery and are no longer able to support the same successes. The Basic Competencies Programme was designed with minimal supports for expanded delivery. Additional supports should only enhance its impact.

with relevant organizations and government officers working in Afghanistan;

- Develop a comprehensive plan of action to implement rapid education delivery;
- Publish sufficient numbers of Basic Competencies textbooks for the early primary grades to meet the plan's estimates;
- Develop systems to support the delivery of the programme:

    -prepare a short teacher orientation that describes and models the consistent lesson format, defines difficult concepts and terms, and explains where teachers can find further support (with a brief handout that covers the same topics),
    -train a network of facilitators who can deliver packages, provide orientation and minimum support, and later conduct independent assessments of learning
    -develop a simple bank of test items for each basic competency to enable testing and oversight of the program (and to later give credit for completion of levels)

- Introduce the program as rapidly as possible to primary-age children in broad geographic areas of Afghanistan through the organizations and channels identified in the earlier stock taking exercise;
- Finalize the Afghan-produced core materials intended for the later primary grades of formal schooling;
- Introduce them through the same channels and with similar support systems;
- Develop systems for self-instruction and credentializing for upper primary grades; these may be needed especially in areas where children have attained basic skills but where teachers cannot be found or children cannot attend school for other reasons.

The schools in the majority of provinces in Afghanistan normally are on break from December until March because of weather conditions. This break period provides time for external conditions to stabilize and for the team to set up the needed systems to support delivery of the program.

C. Medium-term support for rebuilding Afghan education institutions

The medium-term efforts to rebuild the national education system will necessarily involve many actors and organizations. This section suggests only that the experiences in developing the Basic Competency core materials and using them in rapid provision of opportunities can inform and support the establishment of a cost-effective education system.

The assumption of this support is that education systems should have as their main purpose the cost-effective delivery of quality education to all children of the nation. Consequently the development of the Basic Competencies program and, during Rapid Response, the design of minimalist systems for management, teacher training, supervisory support, assessment, monitoring, alternative forms of delivery, and credentilizing all can provide lessons that will be valuable to those who design the new structures of education. The "lean" structures of a national institution can well evolve from these experiences.

D. Actions to improve the academic programme over the long-term

The Basic Competencies were developed to regularize and systematize an education programme that had little focus, required considerable support and which, for the most part, was not accomplishing the purpose of teaching children basic reading, writing, and mathematical skills. The Basic Competencies programme is a solid programme, but like any programme it must evolve to improve. The following section suggests ways that it should improve and expand in the future to meet the needs of Afghan children. Even in the advent of plans to reinvent or restructure the curriculum, it can serve as a basic framework.

II Increasing Participation: Access and Retention

A Main issues in Afghan reconstruction:

The main issues relating to access and retention are:

- Advocacy/awareness of children's right to education
- Equitable distribution of opportunities
- Bringing programs to scale
- Culturally sensitive approaches
- Involving/mobilizing communities and parents
- Quality and relevance of content
- Programs amenable to flexible delivery

Afghanistan has special categories of children who have missed out on education due to war-time conditions and special constraints on their participation, such as girls during the Taliban era, and youth who were engaged in military service. These are discussed briefly in the section below.

B Relevant conditions in Afghanistan

There are several opportunities and constraints in the Afghan situation that need consideration in addressing issues of children's participation:

1. Opportunities:

Opportunities to increase participation in education include:

- Increased Afghan interest in education, especially for girls;
- Increased willingness of communities to become involved in and take responsibility for local education;
- An existing network of government schools that can now be reopened for girls and boys, using male and female staff;
- The existing networks of regional government offices, NGOs and community-based organizations that can provide outreach for rural areas;
- An existing Afghan-developed primary program that can support less-qualified teachers, thus expanding potential teaching candidates;
- A primary program designed for delivery to difficult-to-reach children with a minimum of support.

2. Constraints:

Constraints include:

- The difficulty of bringing services to scale quickly;
- The limited number of schooling opportunities in Afghanistan as a whole and the difficulty in reaching many areas;
- The limited capacity within government structures to manage large-scale distribution;
- An insufficient number of qualified teachers, especially female teachers in some areas, and few secondary opportunities where they could become academically qualified;
- The widespread existence of poverty and, in some areas cultural norms that limit the enrollment and retention of children;

Objective: To expand on and supplement the Basic Competencies Programme

Activities include to:

- Expand the range of primary subjects using the Basic Competencies approach: social studies, science, history, etc.
- Develop additional programs based on the present materials that meet special needs: accelerated and non-formal programmes that lead to a primary certificate, or catch-up courses for dropouts or older children;
- Prepare additional instructional aids such as self-study boxes with math problems and reading passages with enriching content in culture, science, civil society;
- Based on or using existing distance learning materials for radio prepare foreign language courses for primary education in grades 3 through 6.
- Extend the Basic Competencies approach to higher grades at the middle and secondary level, and design materials so they can be used in self-instruction if necessary.

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- Most existing programmes lacking relevant content and in many cases providing little academic skill development
- Some parents still unaware of the importance of education or the benefits it might bring to their families.

C. Discussion: enrolling and retaining children, especially girls

The reasons for low participation have turned out to be fairly similar in all countries where they have been studied. Most of these constraints, especially on girls' participation, fit conveniently into three general categories:

- A lack of accessible opportunities to go to or continue in school (because of lack of schooling places, distance, danger, or need for protection);
- Parental unwillingness to send children for whatever reason (cost, need for child's labor, lack of awareness about the need for education, traditional norms/ideologies, poor quality learning)
- Children's unwillingness to go to school (learning difficulties, dislike of school, problems with peers, or personal reasons such as illness, death of a parent, etc.)

The implication is that if these constraints are addressed -- if opportunities are available, parents want children to go to school, and the children themselves want to go -- then they will go to school and continue until these conditions change.

D. Strategies to increase enrollment and retention

Several strategies have been used to address the constraints above. The most common of the ones having potential for significant impact (although not always without a cost) are the seven below:

- Increasing the number of schooling places;
- Involving communities in mobilizing their own members to enroll and retain children in school;
- Creating flexible delivery systems that make it possible to reach children in a variety of conditions and circumstances;
- Improving the quality of programmes so children are more successful academically, and parents see the benefits of education;
- Providing more relevant content of programmes, so children can immediately make use of what they learn in school to the benefit of their families and communities;
- Creating more girl-friendly schooling environments so girls feel more comfortable in school;
- Motivating girls and their parents through scholarship and other incentive programmes.

The intent of these strategies is to make schooling more convenient and the benefits more apparent. While the first five work for both boys and girls, they often benefit girls more. The last two are designed especially for girls.

Another important strategy that is only partially addressed here (under mobilising communities, creating girl-friendly classes, and incentives) is "advocacy." Activities to advocate for educational participation tend to be most successful when they take advantage of existing networks and relevant organizations, and use effective local means of communication, such as community meetings, radio, television, influential leaders, etc. The messages must be simple, targeted, and realistic. They need to focus directly on the important aspect of the problem: enrolment, dropout, and/or transition to the next educational stage. Sometimes the influence of the person who does the advocating is important. There has been mixed result with religious leaders--in some countries they have been helpful and in others they have been a liability. Active community leaders have often been very effective while others lack interest. An important factor is government commitment and willingness to promote

mobilization campaigns and other means at their disposal to increase participation.

1. Increasing the number of schooling places.

Many countries equate schooling opportunities with government-built school buildings. The main problems with too rigid an adherence to this perspective are:

- The high cost of construction in education budgets may divert attention from other important education elements;
- The common practice of not providing an instructional programme until a building exists, delays/denies education to many children of a country;
- School construction often depends on the acquisition of land and may be delayed in urban and rural areas where land is expensive or not available;
- Alternative and more cost-effective options may not be given a chance to provide temporary or long-term relief.

When resources are abundant, there is no problem in aiming to provide every child a place in a well-built school. In Afghanistan many schools are now damaged and in need of rehabilitation before they can be safely used by children. Others have been used for other purposes, and need to be reclaimed and repaired. Many areas of the country need new schools, especially where schooling opportunities have been limited. In these areas low-cost designs using local materials may be preferable. The main caution overall is that provision of instructional programmes not be dependent upon a formal school building being available. Programmes and buildings need to be de-linked.

Some alternative options have included:

To save money, some countries have used alternatives to the costly "government formal school in every village" model. Often these options are used when no government buildings exist or where they are far away or otherwise inaccessible:

- Home schools or classes run by single teachers in their homes;
- One-room schools with a single teacher teaching all grades;
- Construction of schools that serve a cluster of villages, or feeder schools that serve the early primary grades until children are old enough to walk to distant schools;
- Boarding facilities to consolidate older children near a middle or secondary school;
- Community-sponsored schools in community-built, rented or volunteered space, in tents and other forms of shelter;
- Cost-sharing arrangements, where governments pay for part of the expense (often materials) and communities provide labor for construction;
- Cost-sharing where communities show their commitment by providing a location, teacher, and pupils for a period of time and then the government builds a school;
- Cost-reducing initiatives such as providing pre-fabricated or easily-erected schools, or buildings made from local materials.

For schooling where government buildings exist but the problems are not enough places or not the right kind of places:

- Two or more school shifts (learning does not need to be affected if fresh teachers are used for each shift and instructional time is not reduced);

- In conservative communities where single sex schools are required, girls go in one shift and boys in another;
- Overflow space, in shelters or verandas on school grounds;
- Classrooms, shelters, kiosks built by the community.

Two other physical infrastructure issues are important: latrines and school furnishings. Children need clean, private latrines that are separate for girls and boys. An absence of these amenities has been shown to be a major factor in girls leaving school, especially as they grow older. School furnishings are a costly item that experience in many cases, including rural areas of Pakistan, shows are not needed. If children are used to sitting on the floor at home, they can easily and more comfortably sit on the floor in school (on some form of mat or carpet floor covering). Pupil desks and benches take space, soon become broken, and obstruct the passage of teachers and pupils through the classroom. Sometimes classes of older (and larger) children may find it more convenient to use low desks that raise their work off the floor. Teachers generally like to have a chair and desk that raises them and their work above the children. A blackboard is indispensable to classroom teaching.

2. Mobilizing communities to increase participation

The common reasons given for mobilizing community participation are to reduce the costs of schooling to governments and to gain support for primary education generally. Communities have become involved in:

- Building or renovating schools by providing resources and/or in-kind contributions such as identifying sites, contributing land, finding inexpensive contractors, providing labor and materials; they have also added classrooms and facilities such as latrines, playgrounds, and study kiosks;
- Taking responsibility for maintaining school buildings;
- Providing rented or free classrooms and schools;
- Endorsing the norm of schooling through mobilization campaigns that identify local school-age children, encourage them to enroll, counsel them to stay in school, provide them with tutoring help, monitor their attendance, and support their school costs or otherwise solve problems that prevent their attendance;
- Creating conditions conducive to attending school such as flexible daily and annual schedules that are amenable to the work schedules of local families;
- Supporting accelerated programmes, evening classes, or special needs classes for older or drop out children;
- Addressing academic program needs by ensuring the presence of textbooks and instructional materials, identifying local qualified candidates for teaching positions, checking on teachers' attendance, and holding teachers accountable for children's learning performance;
- Providing accommodation and/or board to encourage teachers to teach in the community;
- Raising funds for special purposes, often through parent-teacher groups;
- Managing and monitoring local schools through village management committees, especially when schools are remote and visited only infrequently by education officials.

NGOs often play a useful role in mobilizing community involvement because they can link communities with outside resources and the officials who are responsible for inputs into education programs. In turn they can reach across a number of communities to extend the efforts of governments and increase participation more quickly. Many however only have the funding and capacity to reach communities within a limited area.

Projects that have tried to involve communities have had mixed success, usually for reasons that relate to their design:

- They have not been clear in their reasons for involving communities.

- They have informed communities of what their role should be rather than giving communities space to define their own contributions/responsibilities.
- Project resources or efforts are used up-front to engage communities (e.g. to establish village committees and/or parent-teacher associations, to do needs assessments, to mobilize help to build schools, or solicit funds) but little support is provided to sustain community participation over time.

Consequently, community support has often been most active at the time when schools are established. In the end, communities have shown they can increase enrollment and retention substantially by establishing local "norms of participation." However, they have not been very effective at improving other education measures such as ensuring better learning in academic programs, reducing the costs of schooling substantially, or sustaining their own involvement once outside support is withdrawn.

Research has shown that when governments decide to rely more heavily on community financing of education, the burden almost always falls most heavily on parents (rather than the community at large) who already bear the heaviest costs. As a consequence, children's participation often declines.

When the reverse is true, as in some African countries, and the government steps in to share the costs of community-built schools by paying teacher salaries, other difficulties arise. More government resources go into communities that can afford to establish schools and less is left for programs in poor areas where no schools exist. In addition, because the cost of salaries absorbs the large share of education resources, little is invested in program development to prevent decline in quality.

Reports suggest that communities in Afghanistan are demanding education faster than it is being supplied, and if this is the case then a favorable climate exists for providing services quickly with a good measure of cost-sharing support from communities. Communities that demand services are more likely to provide support for their schools than communities that have been mobilized reluctantly through outside organizations. An issue for Afghanistan becomes one of whether to focus more on meeting existing demand or trying to create demand in resistant areas. The first may be cheaper and quicker while the latter, although more expensive, may have greater impact on the development of disadvantaged regions.

Local support institutions

Worldwide the two most common local institutions (outside of political structures) that support schools are parent-teacher associations (PTAs) and village education committees (VECs). PTAs are usually formed at the instigation of school authorities, or in some cases by a group of concerned parents. The membership consists, as the name implies, of head teachers, teachers and parents. Their meetings usually consist of reports from the staff about school concerns such as the attendance of children, school schedules, discipline, homework, performance, etc. Sometimes talks are given on issues that relate to children's development and parental responsibility in supporting their children's education. Parents may be asked for help in rising funds, maintaining school grounds, and offering tutoring to weaker students. The more dynamic groups may take on projects to improve the school, such as constructing needed facilities like latrines, establishing outdoor shelters to relieve over-crowded classrooms, and raising money through organizing events. PTAs could also perform the important role (although this rarely happens) of demanding accountability of school staff through review of test scores, or in questioning head teachers about deficiencies such as poor teacher attendance or harsh discipline. The idea behind PTAs is that by bringing teachers and parents together they can better support children's education.

VECs are a newer initiative. These committees have various compositions that often include a combination of community leaders, family elders, parents, local teachers, and sometimes even older pupils from the local school. They may require that a particular ratio of members be women, or, in conservative societies, a parallel committee may be formed for women only (this group is often charged with monitoring female teachers, and approaching

mothers about issues concerning their daughters' attendance). Older women without so many household duties may be drawn to these committees. Some VECs deliberately allow only memberships comprising parents (e.g. one from each larger extended family of the community) and hold elections every 1 or 2 years. The advantage is that the VEC is less likely to become political or entrenched yet it represents the main families using the school. The disadvantage is that committee members may not have the power to obtain their needs from district or regional authorities. Membership size is usually kept small to allow for more efficient decision-making and management of the school.

The VEC's role varies but it may act as an oversight body for the school by:

- setting expectations and a vision for the school,
- running mobilization campaigns to enroll all children, and addressing problems of children who face difficulties,
- requiring and commenting on plans and reports from the school,
- overseeing/checking the schools' financial expenditures,
- raising funds for additional needs of the school,
- maintaining and renovating the school,
- ensuring the presence of inputs coming from the education office,
- identifying acceptable teachers, providing them accommodation and other incentives to teach locally,
- monitoring attendance of children and teachers, and
- reviewing and following up on discipline cases.

When VECs work well, they are an asset to the community, the school, and the education office. They provide the daily oversight that government officers do not have the time or resources to do themselves.

3. Creating flexible delivery systems

The Afghans in the Peshawar meetings suggested that equity be addressed by first creating broad agreement on a framework of rights, including the right of every child to an education. Within this framework, educators would have the responsibility of delivering services flexibly and sensitively to suit the needs of different children.

Flexible delivery is important in Afghanistan for the following reasons:

- Many Afghan children live in remote and difficult-to-access and support areas.
- Even when formal schools are available, some girls are not allowed to walk through public areas, attend coed schools, or be taught by an unknown or male teacher.
- Children may need to work during daylight hours or at other specified times that conflictt with the normal school programme.
- Migrant or nomadic groups do not remain in a single area long enough to attend formal schools.
- During the Taliban era, many girls who would have gone to school were forced out of public schools and therefore missed their opportunity to learn and they are now "over-age."
- Boys were able to attend public schools but most of these schools, because of lack of Taliban support, barely functioned if they functioned at all; these boys are also over-age.
- When girls reach a certain age or grade, they may be withdrawn from school.
- Teachers may feel they cannot continue teaching beyond certain grades because of the complexity of the subject matter.
- Potential teachers in some areas may not have completed enough academic training to qualify by normal standards, and without them there can be no schooling.
- Teachers may not be able to travel to or spend time away from home for training, and training is not easily

brought to them.

- Supervisors may not have the resources, the transport or the time to visit schools more than infrequently.
- Waiting for school buildings to be built or rehabilitated before programmes are provided prevents children from accessing opportunities, and diverts funds from spreading services broadly and quickly.

"Flexible delivery" means that services are provided in ways that meet children's needs and are acceptable to parents, rather than according to rigid expectations about how programmes "should" be delivered: in school buildings, with highly qualified teachers, under ideal conditions, or only when children are a certain age.

Flexible delivery in Afghanistan would require a format that has some or all of the following characteristics:

- Adapts to various physical conditions such as home and community schools, formal schools, small or large classes, rural or urban communities, nomadic or migrant situations, under trees;
- Easily used by various types of teachers: highly qualified and less well-qualified, trained and untrained, professionals and non-professionals, colleagues and peers;
- Supports teachers: requires little training, supervision, or other kinds of educational support;
- Supports learners in that it can be accelerated, conducted in time periods and locations that are convenient to children, and can be used by older children or adults in self-instruction when no teachers are available or circumstances disrupt the normal educational path;
- Provides a system to assess and give credit to individuals who complete defined stages of learning, so people of any age, during any time span, through any means of instruction can be qualified at various levels.

A flexible delivery system is most easily built around core instructional materials or textbooks. They must be self-evident and readily used by any literate person. Their standards should be as high for rural as urban children. If they are suitable for difficult rural conditions, they will also fit urban conditions (the reverse is not necessarily true). Teachers should be able to rely on the materials almost completely and produce good results, or they should be able to elaborate on them when they believe their own methods can produce the learning objectives equally well or better.

For these purposes the materials should be designed:

- To systematically carry the content of the national curriculum;
- To be easily transported to any environment (rural school/urban school, home school, community school, formal school) and not depend upon the existence of school buildings, other facilities, extensive teacher training or supervision;
- To provide consistent lesson formats and brief instructions in the text that make orientation of teachers in how to use them require a minimum of time and effort;
- For use where necessary in self-instruction from grade 4 on by both pupils and teachers;[1] and
- With clearly defined learning objectives so assessments can be used to measure their attainment (and also control for the quality and standards of the opportunities being offered).

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[1] In Afghanistan the curriculum becomes more difficult by Grade 4 and teachers do not like to teach subjects in fields where they have no specialized training. In home schools where one teacher teaches all subjects, she may prefer to start a new cycle of children rather than continue with the older ones. Girls at this age also often drop out of school because of norms of seclusion. If self-evident self-instruction programs were available these older girls could study on their own or with friends with only infrequent contacts with a teacher.



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CONTENTS

Executive Summary

This paper is intended as support for the efforts of a group of Afghan educators who in November 2001 began discussions on the future directions of Afghan education. The audiences for the paper include besides this group, a broader group of Afghan educators engaged in provision of education services, other Afghan stakeholders in government departments and assistance organizations, and assistance agencies and donors who will make funding decisions about the reconstruction of Afghan education. The current unprecedented circumstances suggest the importance of taking stock of current assets and identifying key issues that will need to be addressed if Afghanistan is to build an effective national education system. There is no more urgent priority for the psychosocial well-being of Afghan children than to restore as rapidly as possible the normalcy of a routine schooling programme.

This paper presents models, policy options and strategies utilized elsewhere to address issues similar to those the Afghans raised during their discussions. It describes both the positive and negative consequences of their adoption in other developing countries. Four main topics are discussed: Increasing Participation, Improving Quality, Developing National Institutions, and Building Afghan Education on Existing Foundations and Initiatives. The first three are presented as background discussion; the fourth is based on an ongoing Afghan activity to develop a better quality education program for Afghan children. This last section suggests, after discussions with some of the Afghan developers, the next steps that might be taken to implement this program and how it fits into the plans to rebuild education in Afghanistan.

Seven main strategies/issues are discussed with regard to expanding the participation of children, and especially girls: increasing schooling places, mobilizing the efforts of communities, flexible delivery, quality's effects on levels of participation, providing more relevant content, making schools more girl-friendly, and providing incentives/scholarships for girls. They all have implications in terms of costs, level of effort, and potential to impact large numbers of children. The "Improving Quality" section describes various definitions of quality, and then suggests a working definition. It describes an aligned program model linking all educational components to clearly defined national learning objectives. The section on "Developing National Institutions" describes the functions of institutional structures, looks at planning and the information systems that support it, and describes where decision-making functions might be lodged in decentralized education systems. This section also reviews issues regarding teachers: their recruitment, hiring and firing, and their salaries and training. Other issues such as technical/vocational training, languages, adult literacy, kindergartens and feeding programmes are also discussed. The section ends with a description of a hypothetical "lean" Ministry of Education based on cost-cutting measures that have been used elsewhere.

The decisions made in the coming period will have a strong impact on the shape of Afghan education delivery in the future. Not all advice is good, and it is therefore important that the lessons learned in other parts of the developing world inform the choices that Afghans will need to make.